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ABSTRACT

This monograph provides guidelines to help those school districts considering a more decentralized form of management. The authors discuss the levels at which different types of decisions should be made, describe the changing nature of the educational environment, identify different centralization-decentralization models, and suggest a flexible method for resource allocation in a decentralized district. In addition, the effects of decentralization on budgeting, purchasing, teaching strategies, and personnel practices are examined. The presentation is designed to show that decentralization leads to autonomy with accountability. (JF)

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DECENTRALIZED DECISION MAKING TOWARD EDUCATIONAL GOALS

by

William W. Monahan
and
Homer M. Johnson

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FOREWORD

This monograph was written to provide guidance for school districts considering a more decentralized form of management. Many school districts are searching for better ways to manage education and this monograph represents a significant alternative for study.

The authors approach this topic from diverse but significant backgrounds:

Dr. William W. Monahan is presently Superintendent of the Fremont Union High School District in Sunnyvale, California, a district which has adopted a decentralized system. Previously, he was Superintendent of the Freeport School District in Illinois. He has had wide experience as a teacher and administrator and has written articles dealing with flexible staffing, pre-school education, and bond elections.

Dr. Homer Johnson, a teacher and administrator for over 20 years was Head of the Department of Educational Administration at Utah State University from 1963 to 1969. He has done considerable research in the area of change processes, and people who are willing to change. He is presently a private consultant in education, working with school districts on program and organizational planning, facility planning, and career education.

The Oregon School Study Council sponsored a conference on administrative decentralization earlier this year. The Governing Board is glad to be able to share this monograph on this significant issue with all OSSC members.

Kenneth A. Erickson
Executive Secretary

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I

WHERE SHOULD THE DECISIONS LIE?

Let's begin with a little quiz. Think carefully about the school district in which you work. Suppose that the following represent typical decisions that must be made during the school year. Where do you think the decision point should be? Place a check in the appropriate column.

	Local School	Other
1. The decision on the priority for the use of unscheduled rooms and multipurpose areas.		
2. The decision on the instructional aids to be included in the budget.		
3. The decision on the selection of textbooks.		
4. The decision on the practice of assigning homework.		
5. The decision to determine rules for tardiness.		
6. The decision on the assignment of teaching loads.		
7. The decision on the assignment of non-teaching duties.		
8. The decision to send a teacher on a three-day leadership conference to Las Vegas.		
9. The decision to change the working hours of an office secretary.		
10. The decision for the next school year to replace two non-teaching positions with an additional teacher.		
11. The decision to initiate or abandon a team-teaching program of instruction.		

	Local School	Other
12. The decision to select and purchase a map.		
13. The decision to select and retain a consultant, not on the district staff, to assist four teachers to set up a remedial reading program.		
14. The decision to determine what clubs or other student organizations will be permitted at your school.		
15. The decision to suspend publication of a student newspaper for derogatory statements about the faculty.		
16. The decision on the activities for inservice development of the staff.		
17. The decision to select and purchase a brand of tape recorder that has never been used before in the district.		
18. The decision for a field trip to an electronic equipment assembly plant 14 miles away from school.		
19. The decision to conduct a testing program to determine the progress of students in specific areas.		
20. The decision to determine the administrative organization in a school.		
21. The decision to give some teachers an additional "free" period for preparation.		
22. The decision to send a teacher for a four-week course on new instructional methods, paying all expenses.		
23. The decision to initiate a new course never offered in the district.		
24. The decision to purchase a great deal of learning equipment rather than hire a teacher.		
25. The decision to eliminate department heads and replace with a single curriculum specialist.		

	Local School	Other
26. The decision to hold a minimum day.		
27. The decision to minimize purchases one year so that TV consoles could be purchased the next.		
28. Approve requisitions and expenditures for a school.		

If you felt that most of these decisions should have been made at the local school level, then this book on decentralized management will be valuable to you. On the other hand, if you felt that most of these decisions were outside the prerogative of the local school, then autonomy with accountability is not your interest.

In either case, the choice to read on is yours. We have decentralized that decision. This material does attempt to answer some of the whys and hows of decentralizing the decision making toward the better achievement of educational goals.

II

FROM WHERE TO WHERE - ANALYSIS

Though it is obviously a truism, it is important to remember that schools and school districts exist so that students can learn. It seems paradoxical, therefore, that they should emerge as organizations which appear to inhibit reaching this goal.

Schools are institutions organized to allocate the elements of time, space, people, and material within certain limits of geography and money. Decisions must be made continuously about these three elements. We now present a thesis that changing conditions in this country call for a different type of organization to answer needs caused by these prevailing or emerging conditions.

The American Imprint

Society and some cultures have taken on imprints in their early development just as individuals might. What we are suggesting, then, is that America took on an imprint which resulted in certain types of institutions.

Psychologists suggest that an imprint in an individual does not change; that the imprint which he receives in early childhood remains with him throughout his lifetime. This is not to say that the person does not mature; this is not to say that the person does not change. It simply says that the imprint which he possesses is a sort of screen through which all of his perceptions and his thoughts and his attitudes are filtered. The imprint, therefore, has some effect on his behavior throughout his entire life. Psychologists further

suggest that the only way to change that imprint is through some rather serious traumatic event in the life of the individual. This event, or this trauma, must be so great that the imprint that was placed there in his early childhood is somehow altered, becoming a new imprint. Fortunately, or unfortunately, this sort of trauma rarely occurs in individuals, and, consequently, one can expect to possess his imprint for his life. In persons with serious psychological problems, and/or mental problems, however, sometimes the psychiatrist attempts to impose a trauma which will somehow alter the imprint sufficiently so that the individual has a new screen through which to see his world, and, consequently, behave differently.

The intent, at this point, is not to dwell on the imprint or the change of the imprint in an individual, but to talk rather about the imprint and the changing of the imprint in a society, or, in our case, a nation, the United States. There is reason to believe that World War II was a sufficiently traumatic incident to alter the imprint which the United States has lived with since its beginning. Following the war, we began to develop a different way of looking at events in this country. We began to realize that dramatic changes could occur. We realized also that some of the changes seemed to be out of our control, while others, with some careful planning, could be somewhat controlled.

Population a Factor of Change

Let's take a look, then, at some of the conditions which seemed to be both causes and examples of the changes that are occurring. The first one, often discussed and an important factor, has been the dramatic increase in our population. It has not only occurred in the United States but world-wide.

Needless to say, this has an effect on our institutions. This dramatic expansion of population has increased the need for school facilities, has increased the need for teachers, and has, consequently, dramatically increased the cost of school institutions. Likewise, crime has increased and prisons have become filled. As the population has increased, so have unemployment and related problems, and consequently the welfare problems of this country have swelled. One could go on and on but it is needless to dwell on this point. It is simply important to say that the population expansion which appeared to be so dramatic following World War II has had an acute effect on the institutions of this country.

Even though we recognize that there is a certain leveling off of this population, its effect is still evident in the large number of people who expect to be educated. It has likewise reached to both lower and higher levels of education. What once was a community with just an elementary and a high school is now a community of several elementary schools and several high schools. Where once an institution dealt with a certain age group, approximately 6 to 18 years, now we have institutions schooling children younger than six and adults of all ages through the regular community colleges and adult education programs. Even though there appears to be a leveling off of population growth, we cannot sit idle because, according to certain sociologists, the same problems may recur when a second generation of children follows the large numbers of births that occurred as a result of the World War II marriages.

Our Changing Knowledge Base

Another factor to which we have all become acutely aware is sort of dual-headed. First is the rapid increase in man's knowledge, and second is the

rapid obsolescence of knowledge and the consequent obsolescence of education. Our increased knowledge field can best be described as an open-ended cone in which man's knowledge started at the narrow peak of the cone and the more he knows, the more there appears for him to know. We have become sharply aware of this since World War II. World War II, perhaps, was the factor that gave us the impetus in scientific knowledge which proved that we can, with great efforts, expand our field of knowledge. Man has since that time dramatically increased what he knows. We do not need to dwell long on the fact that man now walks on the moon. We also know that man's ability to walk on the moon started as a result of the development of rockets as a weapon in World War II. This is an apt example because we know that rocketry is much older than World War II. The war simply was the impetus of many things we now see as realities.

A World Diminishing in Size

Man's increased knowledge and his application of this knowledge to technology has caused this world to become smaller and smaller. It means that men in the United States now know things that they have not known before about the rest of the world. It means that man can now sit in his home and view what is happening across the world.

It means that man can now, through some simple efforts, quickly move from this country to another part of the world. This diminishing of the world, in terms of sight and sound, visibility and visitability, has also given us a great deal more to think about. It has taken us to a more pluralistic way of viewing and thinking about the world and its inhabitants. This pluralism of thought, though always encouraged by educated men, has also increased the problems with which the country must deal. Simply stated, as long as everyone thinks in the same way the resulting behavior is more likely to be uniform.

But as we find people thinking differently, the resulting behavior is different and, consequently, the probability of problems increased. How man thinks, then, how much man knows, and the rapid technological advancement that man has caused, have resulted in a rather acute problem for the schools.

This problem, simply stated, is that it's also possible for one's training or education to become dramatically obsolete in a very short period of time. Whereas just a few years ago specialization was encouraged, there now seems to be a returning trend to a more general education. This results from a fear that when specialized training rapidly becomes obsolete, the individual is left with nothing. On the other hand, if he can acquire a rather solid general education, he has a greater capability of varying his specialization as he gets into his particular profession or occupation. One can see this very clearly when he views the large numbers of trained teachers who are not now able to find jobs. This is also true in the aerospace industry, or the electronics industry, where we find engineers and chemists of all types without jobs. There are many people with advanced degrees unable to find work for which they have been trained.

A Concern for Individuals

Each time we add a factor of change, we seem to be on the way toward development of another factor of change. And so is the case in the next item. Population expansion, increased pluralism of thought, the diminishing world, the increased knowledge, the rapid obsolescence of knowledge and training, have led us to a greater concern for the individual and how he learns. This, too, though, is in the process of transition. We are not yet near the point where we have given total concern to individual needs. Generally speaking, we

still behave as though all students come to the schools the same, and we make a determined attempt to see that they all leave the schools looking and behaving pretty much the same. There is considerable lip service given to the notion that people really are uniquely different; and that as a result of doing things on an individual basis, they somehow will emerge very differently. We have not, however, found the means and the system by which we can accomplish that about which we feel so strongly.

The Changing Cost of Education

This commitment to the individual, his needs, and to how he learns, comes at a time of spiraling costs of education. As the cost of education goes up, so go the taxes. The taxes paid by people cause a severe drain on their ability to purchase those things which they feel that they need as individuals and as families. More and more, then, the question is being asked: What are we getting for our money? This has brought about the notion of accountability. One can no longer assume that the schools can do whatever they wish and that this will be accepted by the community. The community has very suddenly become concerned about what is happening in their schools. As teachers' salaries go up, as the cost of maintenance and operation goes up, as the buildings become more technically operated, so goes the demand to know what the public is getting for its money.

The Children of Change

One cannot talk about change or transition without considering the "children of change." We have come up with a population of young people who possess sort of a befuddled search for relevancy. As a matter of fact, it is very popular these days to question relevancy, even though one may not know what is

relevant. Relevancy, as a matter of fact, has become the battle cry of the student--particularly at the secondary and university level. What we are saying is not meant to belittle or to make fun of this search for relevancy. We, too, care that our youngsters deal with that which is relevant. We, too, care that our schools do provide a relevant education for our youngsters. Somehow, however, we must bring a certain order to this search for relevancy. It is this drive for reasonable orderliness that will, in the long run, help the young people achieve that which they feel is important. It will also help the schools provide that which is most relevant to the needs of our young people today.

What are the causes of this search for relevancy? Again, we feel that it comes as a result of a lot that has happened since World War II. Our increased technology and, in a general sense, our increased prosperity in this country, has given for the most part a general affluence and, consequently, a certain affluence for many youngsters. If one has not known poverty, or if one has not, in fact, lived through a depression, he cannot then fully understand the problems created by the lack of a job or the consequent lack of money to buy the things that keep him comfortable. Today's youth in the middle class society particularly, has always known a sort of affluence. The things they have needed, the things they have wanted, have always somehow been there. And if one has his needs fulfilled, it reduces the importance of the things that are needed. One, consequently, sees less importance in material things and turns to concern for other matters.

Do not misunderstand; we are not implying that today's youth should be materialistic, we are simply stating a fact that apparently they place less importance in materialistic things than did youth of a few generations past.

A young person today, however, is beginning to think about himself, beginning to think about man, and beginning to concern himself about other men in other parts of the world. There is considerable evidence, for example, that many young people in this country are now reverting back to what they call a simpler life. There is a large group of young people showing evidence that they have little concern for material things. At this point, it is difficult to know the meaning of this. It may, as a matter of fact, simply be a short-term test of something. We do know, however, that because of the befuddled search for relevancy, because of the increased pluralism in thought, that we also may have a new set of values emerging. If we simply take the institution of marriage, we recognize that it is not only the young people who are questioning the value of marriage, but we find older people also taking a new position in regard to marriage and family. It is not our point here to question or test these values; it is simply our point to say that these, as well as many other values, are changing. These emerging values do have a consequent effect on society and an even more consequent effect on the institution of schools.

Given these conditions and emerging needs, then, it becomes rather obvious that something has to change in the institution called schools. There have been many attempts in the past 20 or 30 years to devise a suitable science by which the administration could be examined. The result has been a somewhat shifting back and forth in approaches as observers look at what happens in an organization and what happens to people in these organizations.

People Are Important

At this point in time, however, the emerging theories about how schools should be managed or administered seem to center around the notion that

people are important. Guba and Getzels would talk about this in terms of the importance of "interpersonal relationships." Abraham Maslow, whom we know of as primarily a psychologist, has dealt with a similar approach in what he calls "eupsychian management." Others might deal with it as the behavioral approach to educational administration, or educational administration as a social process, or interpersonal dynamics.

In addition to the theme that centers on the notion that people are important, we also know that if institutions do possess goals, then people must be assigned roles and tasks. In the jargon of the educational theorists, then, there are certain roles in organizations in order that the organization can achieve its goals. These roles tend to define the tasks that must be performed. These same theorists, however, recognize that the roles must be filled by human beings with personal needs and that these needs cannot be minimized. From this, then, has derived a whole set of principles which have to do with knowing about the personal needs of the people who fill roles in institutions.

Some Guiding Principles

As a result of greater numbers of complex problems in public institutions, there came a greater demand for more unique solutions. Consequently, theoreticians or researchers sought for ways to utilize more human beings in the solution of these complex problems. From this research came another set of principles or guidelines which moved in to the business of administering schools. First they found that problems must be solved as near as possible to the setting of the problem. For example, one does not sit in the central office and attempt to solve specific problems occurring in the classroom. If this is done, there is the possibility of imposing solutions on the classroom which, indeed, do not solve problems.

A second principle is that involvement brings a more rapid and complete implementation to solutions. Another way of saying this is that the probability of complete implementation of the solution is less if the decision is made by one or a few people. This is brought about by several reasons: one person limits the number of solutions to a given problem, and secondly, if the person is not involved in the solution, he does not have the solution internalized to the point where he can apply it. This internalization of a solution or the internalization of information is an important part of the communications process. It seems to be related to the degree to which one is involved in the development of the solution.

There are other principles that have developed from research and theorizing about this business of administering schools. One important principle that we have attempted to apply is that people do have worth and that people do have talents and that these talents are typically unused. If we really do believe that people have worth and talent, we will then be able to involve them in both problem definition and problem solution. As a result of these principles, or sort of theoretical positions, about how to involve people in the solution of administrative or management problems in institutions, we have brought about certain practices. These practices are not totally assimilated by the institutions but they appear to be emerging, and they appear to be more suitable for the times than those that emerged from our early history. The emerging practice, or trend, then, seems to be to move the problem solutions to the point at which they are occurring. This, then, somehow means dispersing the responsibility and the authority, that is, "sharing the load," thus we have the point of view which we call decentralization.

The Development of Decentralization

It is interesting to note that as one examines textbooks in administration of a few years past, there were statements made which implied that education is reasonably decentralized in this country. When one considers the possible federal, state, and local levels, education is reasonably decentralized from a state position. What we are talking about, however, is within the individual institutions and within the district which has a central office. It is here where things are happening and it is here that we see the ability to decentralize. The kind of decentralization we're talking about also places upon it a demand that the climate of the school, or the district, become far more open than it has been in the past.

An open climate is one in which responsibility and authority are placed at all levels, where people do work harder, and where motivation comes from a desire to work and from the knowledge that all people in the district do share the load in seeing that the job of educating youngsters does get accomplished. This is quite different than depending upon administrative edict from a central position to cause behavior to occur so that youngsters learn.

Some Useful Assumptions

If, indeed, we are going to have an open climate; if, indeed, we are going to disperse responsibility and authority, and let the right people do the right things, we must somehow establish a set of assumptions, keeping in mind that assumptions never do, in fact, exist completely. The success, however, of what we propose is increased by the degree to which the assumptions do exist and/or do hold true.

One must assume, for example, that everyone is to be trusted. This is not intended to sound naive, because to us it is probably one of the most important

of any of the assumptions which will follow. It does not mean, for example, that we must trust everybody in this whole world, because certainly there is reason to mistrust certain people. It doesn't assume also that all people are alike. It does assume, however, that we have selected people for our educational institutions who want to be involved, who want to do a good job, and who are relatively decent, talented, healthy, and mature people.

Another important assumtpion is that <u>everyone needs to be informed</u> as completely as possible of as many facts and truths as possible. You see, this hasn't always been the case in public schools. There has been a certain virtue in keeping a rather tight rein on the budget. If, in fact, you wish people to share in the load of efficiency and effectiveness, at the level of students, then somehow they must know the facts about the resources available to do that job. What we're really saying is that if you are going to indeed decentralize, then you must provide people with adequate information so that they can share the burden of problem solution.

Another important assumption that we make is that the people involved in the institution are somehow well above the level of simply striving for security or safety. Another way to say this would be that we are dealing with people who want to see something important accomplished; that they do, as a matter of fact, feel safe in what they are doing and that they do have enough monetary income so they know they can maintain a healthy life for themselves and their families.

We need to assume that <u>people prefer to feel important and needed</u> rather than unimportant or unused or expendable. In the past we have treated people, for example, as though they were expendable; they simply had to do without our caring whether they were important. We assume also that people want to be

treated as whole persons with ability to think as well as to use their hands. I think the best example of this is in the present movement for the liberation of women. Women are being very emphatic when they say, "We want to be thought of as something other than a sex object, or something other than a mother; we want the possibility to be a whole person." This is analogous to the laborer who wants to be thought of as more than just a set of muscles or a strong back.

An important assumption, which may not hold true always, is that people really prefer responsibility to dependency. The problem, as stated earlier, is that people still feel the pressures for obedience or dependency and somehow we have not created the environment that does pay off for involvement. We still have too much of the environment which says that obedience and dependency do pay off.

Let the Right People Do the Right Things

Let us now move to another aspect of the practice that now seems to be emerging and is closely related to decentralization. As a matter of fact, what we are about to say seems to be essential if one desires to decentralize a school system. Remember earlier we discussed the idea that we should let the right people do the right things. Since we are not likely to change very dramatically the way in which school districts function generally, then we must decide what people should be doing what things. The point is that we will probably for a good many years still operate schools with lay boards of education. Likewise, we will probably for a good many years operate our schools with some sort of central administration and, consequently, the people left that can be altered are the staffs of the individual schools. What these three categories of people do, however, probably can be changed. There has in the past been considerable confusion and infusion of what each group did. We have

seen, for example, a school board who did far too much administering. We have likewise seen the central administrator who made all decisions and imposed them on the school staffs and we have consequently seen school staffs completely unwilling to share their load in terms of the solutions of educational problems. The answer then lies in getting each category of people to do the right thing and we're back where we started, letting the right people do the right things.

The role of the board, for example, what should it be? Well, it seems to us that since the board is the liaison between the school and community, the board decides what the schools should teach. The board then is the primary source of the goals for the institution, if indeed they are going to represent the public who places them in office. In the ideal sense, the board, feeling the pulse of the public, sets some general goals for the institution and perhaps does not go beyond that. These commonly are called, and appropriately, policy statements about what schools ought to do.

Let's jump to the other end of the spectrum--the school staffs--and ask the same question: What is their role? It seems important, if we're really talking about a decentralized school system, we're talking about the notion that the school staffs really decide how to do it. That is, how to do what the board decided they should do. The ultimate of this is that the board says that youngsters should learn to read--that's a "what to do" statement. They need not concern themselves with how it is done as long as the goal is reached. The school staffs, the most competently trained, the most experienced and closest to the problem, would then determine how to cause youngsters to read.

We have talked basically about the role of the school board in the decentralization process, that is, the school board decides what it is that youngsters should learn in a school system. On the other end of the continuum, we

have suggested that the staffs of the individual schools decide *how it is that* youngsters would best learn that which the board decides should be learned. We have also briefly touched on certain things that the central administration must be responsible for. Perhaps the most important of these is asking the question: Why? In this case then, they become sort of the devil's advocate for both the board and the school level staffs. They raise questions with the board to be sure local needs have been analyzed correctly. They raise questions asking, why do you think youngsters should learn that, given the conditions of this community? They ask of the staff, why is that the best way in which youngsters can learn a specific kind of thing? Why do you want to allocate your funds in that manner? They then become the tester, the devil's advocate for the what and the how.

Finally, there are some other practices which seem to be emerging. These are practices that emerge as a result of assuming things about people and how they work and attempting to implement them in the most effective and efficient manner. Remember several pages back, we indicated that we have a higher degree of concern now than ever before about the individual and how he learns. If we start with that one simple statement it leads us to some needs in terms of teaching and administering. If, indeed, youngsters as individuals are uniquely different and, if indeed they have different needs and different modes of learning, this then calls for a great deal of flexibility in teaching.

At this point, let's reflect some personal biases regarding this thing called teaching. We have grown to dislike the word "teaching" because it implies a certain feeling of directing. The kind of learning that we're talking about in emerging schools is one that does not utilize the teacher as such a director, but sees the teacher as a responder to students' needs. We have talked about this for a good many years. We've said all the right words, but we still have

not achieved a flexibility in the teaching act to accommodate all the needs and the uniqueness of youngsters. Just as we recognize the uniqueness in youngsters, we must also recognize a level of uniqueness in the teachers. This, then, calls for the ability to tolerate a great deal of flexibility in teaching styles, as long as these teaching styles do not place severe restrictions on the uniqueness of the individual learner. Let's now move this one step higher and recognize that people who are placed in the positions of administering schools likewise possess uniqueness and consequently can each be expected to possess their own repertoire of dealing with people and managing the resources of the school. Now, if we place together in one institution administrators who are unique, with teachers who are uniquely different and learners who are individuals, we must call for a great deal of flexibility which could very likely result in two high schools with the same size populations being very different in how they cause people to learn.

This, we would argue, is good. This, we would argue, is a case for flexibility. This, we would argue, is a case for decentralization. Because, if decentralization does occur, then we allow, at the school level and at the learners level, the flexibility necessary to provide the resources, solutions, and strategies closest to where the learner exists.

III

CENTRALIZATION-DECENTRALIZATION

The Background

A decentralized form of management applies to the encouragement and support of management decisions by those directly responsible for the actions of others and the ensuing results. Decentralization, without the word management attached, is often used to describe a means of administratively sub-dividing a larger structure into smaller units, often on a geographic basis. This may be, however, quite different than "decentralized management." That is, even though the organization is decentralized to the extent that large units are divided into smaller units, the same decisions are made about the organizational elements for all sub-units.

The "management" term comes from industry, and the example most often used is the automobile industry, namely General Motors. Here decentralized management exists because separate divisions, each with its own product line, operate independently but relying on each other and the "super" organization for certain guidelines and functions. General Motors products are related to transportation and its allied fields, while pupil achievement is the product of educational institutions.

As a basic notion, decentralization is particularly appealing under our form of government. This is so partly because our form of government as expressed in the Constitution has been formulated around decision making at local levels--"Government of the People, by the People and for the People." Our

American educational system is a unique part of the intent of our founding fathers as referred to often in terms of national interest, state responsibility, and local function. It is surprising, therefore, that with this national structure, and apparent support from our basic ideals, decentralization has not been given more serious attention and development in the public school setting. Only in the past few years have school districts initiated any serious examination of this concept as it might be applied to education.

The delay in responding to decentralized management by public schools is understandable if one notes the pattern under which schools emerged in this country. They were obviously based on the very centralized European schools, but more importantly, their purposes were more narrow than those of today's schools. That is, there were only a few basic things that would be taught to all people, in the same way, for the same reasons. These, then, were easily centralized types of decisions. In addition, school boards, and consequently superintendents, were very paternalistic in their dealings with teachers and students. They intended to make the decisions because they "knew better than anyone else."

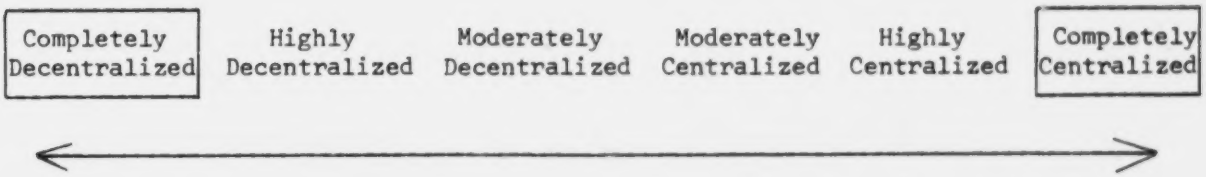
We have come a long way, hopefully, from the days when school boards took the paternalistic attitude of offering contracts that stipulated, for example, "you shall not fall in love." The profession today is made up of teachers, counselors, administrators, and specialists all highly trained and motivated, completely capable of making many important educational decisions. In addition, the schools are offering a far more diverse program of many modes for learning with hopes to accommodate more effectively the differences which exist in students. Thus, it seems that with this historical change in emphasis, schools are overdue in their response to more decentralization in decision-making

authority. This decentralization, however, can be and should be pursued with reason.

The Organizational Model

Decentralization versus centralization, when applied to organizational structure is largely a myth. Obviously, complete decentralization would result in each person being the sole member of his own school district with the freedom to make all decisions in all areas independent of anyone else. Complete centralization, on the other hand, would result in a dictatorship with no one but the dictator having the authority to make a decision. The answer, then becomes not yes or no, but rather a place on a continuum between completely centralized or completely decentralized. See Figure 1.

Figure 1



Doing the greatest number of the right things well, with the people, time, space, and material available, is a measure of efficiency and effectiveness. This then becomes the criteria for making decisions about where to place an organization and its decision-making authority on the centralization/decentralization continuum. There is, therefore, no specific model for every school district but rather many different models depending upon the resources available. The implication, then, is that there are certain principles and criteria upon which to base centralization/decentralization decisions.

Criteria for Centralization-Decentralization Solutions

Decentralization:

1. Individual solutions are needed because of unique situations. Examples:
   a. Staffing patterns at an individual school.
   b. A different program because of the nature of the students in a given area.
2. Decisions are needed frequently. Example:
   a. How to best spend funds allocated within schools.
3. Decisions are needed quickly. Example:
   a. The need to suspend a student for gross misbehavior.

Centralization:

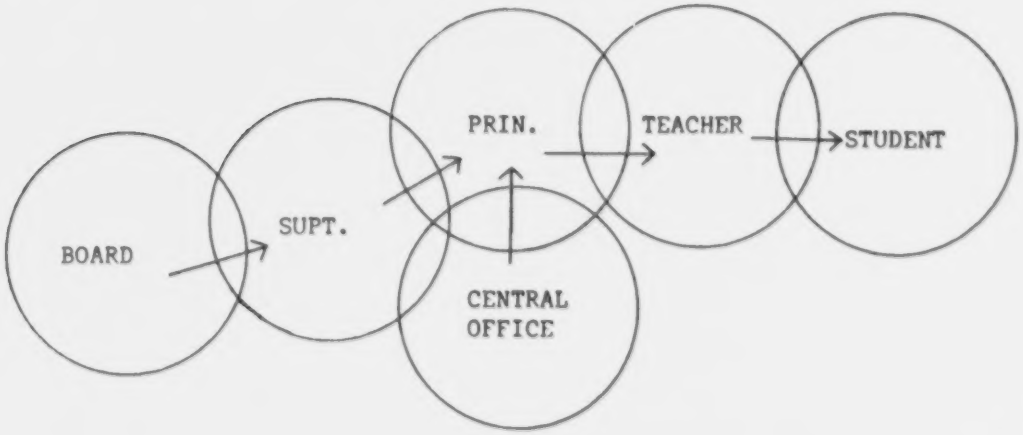
1. A uniform solution is required. Examples:
   a. Teacher salary schedule and placement on teacher salary schedule.
   b. Screening candidates for legal qualifications required by law.
2. Decisions based on information which is all available at a central location. Examples:
   a. Where to place a new school.
   b. How to deploy the school buses.
3. Broadly needed services but very specialized in nature. Example:
   a. Psychological services.
4. Consequences of decision go far beyond the place where the decision was made. Example:
   a. Deciding not to pay for a service that was traditionally paid for.

Note that the list of criteria is not very long nor do the criteria appear to be different than those already applied. The important test, however, is whether you have really allocated the decisions according to these criteria. Any degree of decentralization is lost if decisions are made in the central office that could better be made at the school level. The same holds true

within schools. The teacher has no decision-making autonomy if decisions are arbitrarily made by the principal when they could be made more effectively in the classroom.

This then leads to the idea that there are levels of decentralization within any structure. A typical school district has several opportunities or levels at which to decentralize:

BOARD	-	SUPERINTENDENT
SUPERINTENDENT	-	CENTRAL OFFICE
SUPERINTENDENT	-	PRINCIPAL
CENTRAL OFFICE	-	PRINCIPAL
PRINCIPAL	-	TEACHER
TEACHER	-	STUDENT



The degree to which all levels can have the trust and confidence to move decision-making authority to various levels will determine the climate for greater decentralization. It is not unusual, for example, to find individuals within an organization who want to have authority for decision making but who, upon receiving it, do not delegate it to the next level; e.g., a principal may have authority to select new teachers but may choose not to delegate it to department chairmen.

Thus, the question arises how far to centralize and how far to decentralize. The answer is derived by applying the above criteria to the various levels. To a teacher for example, it makes very little difference if decisions have been decentralized to the school unit, if like criteria have not been applied to the classroom unit. The point is, then, that the decentralization/centralization solution should be a reality at all levels based on sound criteria and not be a scapegoat or fantasy at any level.

Guiding Principles for Decentralization/Centralization

In addition to criteria for determining decision-making location, there are certain principles which are useful in testing for operation reality.

1. With the assignment of responsibility must be some comparable level of authority.

2. Once having given responsibility and authority to a person or unit, it should be left there until reality proves it an error. Vacillating about location of authority, constant checking on progress, or making side decisions all indicate insecurity or lack of confidence on the part of the person giving the authority and tends to breed more insecurity.

3. People must be accountable for consequences of those decisions for which they are given the authority and responsibility to make.

4. People should not be held accountable for consequences of acts or decisions over which they have no authority or responsibility.

5. People who accept responsibility must allow their accountability information to be verified by an auditing process. Auditing does not determine the desirability or undesirability of the results; it only determines if accountability information is accurate.

6. The most competent people available must be filling the roles in an organization.

7. When one gives responsibility and authority he must assume competence and behave with confidence until reality proves otherwise.

8. With responsibility and authority, must be given adequate resources in terms of money, time, facilities, and general services.

9. People who make decisions at the level where problems occur are more likely to carry out the solution.

Examples of Decentralization-Centralization Decisions and Plans

1. Establishing Formulas for School Supply Item Budget

Highly Centralized:	District Office staff makes recommendations for District without consulting staff and one District line item is established without breaking down to individual school budgets.
Moderately Centralized:	District Office staff makes District recommendations after receiving comments from principals.
Moderately Decentralized:	District Office accepts recommendations of principals as part of overall resource allocation--uniform allocations for all schools at a level.
Highly Decentralized:	District Office accepts recommendations of principals for each school--thus each school is different.

2. Making Decisions on Use of School Supply Budget

Highly Centralized:	District Office makes decision and automatically distributes on a per pupil basis.
Moderately Decentralized:	School makes recommendations for standard list and may choose from it or 10 percent of total allocated may be spent on other non-standard items.
Highly Decentralized:	No standard list and schools may describe anything they want without budget limitation.

3. Purchasing Items--Decisions Made as to Name and Quantity

Highly Centralized:	District Office provides all purchasing effort, unit has no choice as to brand or cost.
Moderately Centralized:	District Office provides purchasing services mandatory for item of $100 or more, permissive for items of $99.99 or less and allows initiator's specific brand and criteria to be used if not in conflict with District criteria and specifications.

Moderately Decentralized:	District Office provides purchasing services only on request.
Highly Decentralized:	Each operating unit has its own purchasing function.

Summary

In summary, then, we are not suggesting any specific level of centralization/decentralization. We are suggesting, however, that school districts typically are far more centralized than they should be and that greater efficiency and effectiveness can be achieved by greater decentralization. This, then, means that policies and sub-systems should be thoroughly examined to be sure that they do, in fact, allow decentralization where desirable. People often talk about decentralization and then find that their systems and policies do not allow it in practice.

The ability to have trust and confidence in people to whom responsibility and authority have been given is difficult for some personalities. To acquire the ability requires considerable testing in reality and perhaps some uneasy moments. Usually the results are surprises with a positive effect. In a sense, not to have confidence in people to whom one gives authority is a reflection on his own ability to select competent people, trained and motivated to do the job. In addition, it may mean that he is more of a "doer" than a conceptualizer and a manager. That is, he may feel that he knows how to function so adequately that he derives a great deal of pleasure from making decisions or carrying out decisions, all of which should be done elsewhere.

Another important advantage to moving some decision away from the central position is that it tends to relieve decision loads by distributing them more broadly. This is, in a sense, a side benefit to the effectiveness/efficiency advantage.

Finally, it should be remembered that as a total operating unit, a school district is funded by public funds. Thus, the public expects and has the economic right to demand that an adequate job be done in the schools. This means, then, that decision authority must be made at the level of greatest efficiency and effectiveness. Furthermore, there must be accountability for the decisions that are made, at whatever level they occur.

IV

DECENTRALIZED RESOURCE ALLOCATIONS

Control and accountability in the context of education is like a teeter-totter. As accountability is developed, then the amount of procedural control will diminish. It can also work the other way. If there is a great amount of procedural control, then the impetus for performance accountability will diminish. In this latter case, the name of the game will be to conform to procedural rituals.

Education in California illustrates this point in a paradoxical manner. On one hand the legislature chastises local districts for not developing a greater degree of accountability while at the same time it passes at each session hundreds of educational bills that deal with everything from course content and length of day to procedures on year-round schools and number of minutes for physical education.

Recognizing external constraints placed by the federal government and individual states, it is still possible for a local district to develop a management system that permits controlled autonomy. If we are going to have creative, dynamic, responsive schools, then a greater amount of responsibility for decisions must be decentralized. If we are going to affect change, it is not going to be done effectively in the superintendent's office or at the district bargaining table, but in individual schools.

From the Federal Government to local school systems, we find that decentralization is being increasingly promoted. Why is this? Because, in today's variegated, pluralistic world there is no way that a central bureaucracy can

meet the legitimate, divergent needs of society. It has become pragmatically apparent that creating layer upon layer of hierarchal decision making just doesn't work. If hierarchies and bureaucracies are left to thrive, they will ultimately be subverted to get a job done. The critical question today is not whether a school district is going to decentralize, but how and to what extent, and what areas of decision making are appropriate to the state, to the school board, to the individual school, to the grade level or department, to the teacher, and to the student and parent.

Determination to have autonomous schools is based on two assumptions. The first is that there is a divergence among schools in student needs, parental expectations, community desires, staff talent, and administrative styles. Indeed, if district schools are similar in these variables, then the degree of local school independence should be minimal. The second assumption is that there are limited finances, and there is a need to determine priorities in applying educational resources.

If a district can live with the notion that education covers a narrow field, that there is a best method for all children, that the school board, administration, or teachers association knows what that method is, then decentralization is inappropriate.

If, however, one believes that students come to school with a fantastic array of educational needs, that there are many legitimate goals in life that education should support, that one person's or group's idealogies should not be forced on others, then there must be decentralization. In its broadest sense, decentralization permits an array of educational variables. At one point, we were a great crusader for one form or another of educational process. We "knew" team teaching was best; we "knew" the fuddy-duddy traditional teachers

were wrong; we "knew" that modular scheduling was better than traditional. Today we still have opinions in these areas, but pervading our entire thinking is the realization that a district must provide educational alternatives that are responsive to the variables within a school.

Before developing a system of decentralized decision making and resource application, let us review traditional methods to show why they are not appropriate today.

a) The history of many districts shows one or two schools for the first thirty years of its existence. The district then experiences rapid growth and must establish new attendance boundaries. Parents, conditioned to the old school, must be assured that although the new school may have a different exterior, it is still the old school within, including administrative procedures, course offerings, materials, and time schedules.

b) The superintendent or some other influential person desires to implement a new school program. He musters evidence for the need and elicits support from his staff. Armed with this, he approaches the Governing Board, and if plans are well laid, every school in the system soon adds the new program.

c) Pressure is placed on the superintendent through a principal or the teachers association to add personnel or other resources to a department or grade level.

d) Normative standards, often published by a vested interest group, can intimidate or shame a district into applying additional resources in some area. For example, the guidance association presses for a counselor for every three hundred students, or Dr. Conant indicates that

English teachers should be responsible for no more than one hundred students.

While these methods of decision making are based on good intention, they have significant faults. The first is that they do not encourage individual schools to survey total school objectives in light of limited resources. If you have a district with unlimited resources, then anything worthwhile goes; but if your resources are definitely limited, then each application of resources should be measured against all priority needs. As long as the decision-making system encourages fragmentary considerations by staff members, then the superintendent must assume the responsibility of every resource assignment. In this role, he cannot be right educationally and he cannot be right in pleasing his staff. Application of resources has too long been based on consensus rather than permitting schools and teachers to place resources where they are needed most in a specific school and a specific classroom.

A new plan of school management must be developed. This plan should be consistent with sound principles of management and good personnel practices. It should create a situation that releases creative energy, encourages divergent thinking, but simultaneously insures the public, parents, and students that school resources are being applied most judiciously.

This plan is called Flexible Independent Resource Allocation, or FIRA. What are the resources available to a local school? Fundamentally, there are only four; time, space, personnel, and material. These are the only variables that can be manipulated to create a dynamic school in tune with the needs of its students and community.

Time

Despite state laws, there is generally some latitude within which a local school can adjust its time schedule. We often see within a single district a

variety of time schedules among its schools. Schools should be given the opportunity to explore and utilize time to suit the local situation. If buses are a constraint, then this should be understood before a school commences planning.

Space

It is not the purpose of this book to delve into school house construction. Let it suffice to say that the only thing we know about school facility needs this year is that they will not be the same next year. Therefore, anyone who constructs a facility that is inflexible must have insight that the rest of us lack. The technology of non-load bearing walls is too far advanced today to excuse anyone from constructing a permanent wall facility, no matter how farsighted the planners may be.

For our purposes here, the consistent principle to be applied is that the local school should have autonomy over utilization of the school facility. If new facilities are to be added to present structures, they should not blanket the district. The idea of placing a language lab or a girls' gymnasium in every school may be appealing to central office management, but it should not be done unless that facility is the top priority for every school, which is most unlikely.

Indeed, in one school, the best way to apply capital improvement dollars may be to build a girls' gymnasium, but in another school the greatest need may be for an expanded library or resource center.

FIRA means that capital outlay dollars are applied flexibly to each school to meet that particular local situation.

Personnel and Material

Under the Flexible Independent Resource Allocation concept, personnel and learning material are not weighed separately, but are considered jointly.

Allocations are given to schools in resource units rather than fixed dollars or ratios. These resource units can be called Educational Equivalents or EE's.

An EE can be cashed in for nearly all the needs of a local school. For example, a Table of Educational Equivalents at the secondary level might be:

1 EE = 5 periods of teaching and auxiliary duties
= 2 full-time classified employees
= 474 substitute days
= 3 two-period intern teachers
= $12,800 of hourly help
= $12,800 of learning equipment, supplies, consultants, P. R. material, and anything else that can aid education.
= 2/3 of an administrator
= psychologist, special teachers, supervisors

Translating resources into educational equivalents is done in this manner. The basic unit is the average amount paid to a teacher. Other average personnel salaries are then related to this figure. For example, if the average teacher's wages are $10,800 and the average 10-months secretary's salary is $5,400, the 1 EE equals two 10-month secretaries. It is wise to relate EE's to people rather than to dollar amounts paid to people. If this is not done, the older school, with more people at the top of the salary schedule, will be at a disadvantage.

On the other hand, all costs other than salaried personnel should be on a direct cost basis. As the average teacher salary increases, so does the value of an EE.

Transitional Model

Decentralization is a transitional process. A district should not decentralize instantaneously but should phase, over a period of years, a decentralized program. Besides its transitional nature, decentralization is a dynamic process. It must adjust to a changing world. That which was appropriate to decentralize yesterday may today demand centralized direction. On this point, the president of Varian is quoted as encouraging a flux in centralized-decentralized activity

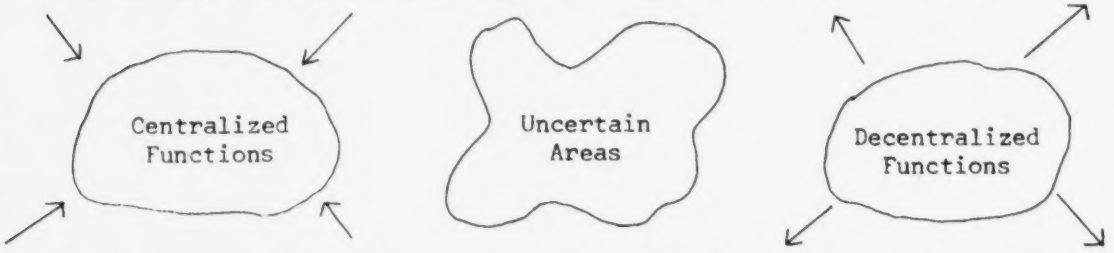
merely for its own sake. As in the case of the Hawthorne effect, there seems to be merit in organizational change itself.

In plotting a course toward controlled decentralization, several steps should be followed:

1. Those areas that should definitely come under centralized control should be delineated. These would probably include such items as pupil transportation and building maintenance.

2. Those areas that are ripe for decentralization should be identified. Items in this category might include internal school staffing, selection of learning materials, and student body management.

3. Those items that do not immediately fall in either category 1 or 2 should be assembled. This category might include administrative staffing, special services, and curriculum development.



Any decentralized planning must be realistic about institutional constraints. When we speak of "autonomy" what we really mean is autonomy within limitations placed by state laws, professional organizations, tradition, money, and other factors. As a school progresses further into decentralization, it will become increasingly desirous of removing these limitations. We predict, therefore, as the decentralization movement gains momentum, that increased pressure will be placed on external constraining agents to permit local schools "to do their own thing."

Decentralizing Some Traditional District Office Concerns

In the transitional model toward decentralization, we perceive a dynamic school district. Each year that a school system is involved in a philosophy that encourages autonomy and responsibility we will see more items included in

the local school's decision-making sphere. For example, let's examine such traditional district office concerns as absenteeism, vandalism, theft, and phone bills. District officials are continually exhorting local schools to check up on absent staff members, to be more watchful over vandalism, to lock classrooms to reduce theft, and to keep an eye on long-distance calls.

Under a decentralized system, concern over these sore spots would be shared by the local school. Traditionally, if a local school were watchful and kept costs down, it received nothing more than a pat on the back. The error in this system is that it does not provide a pay-off for good performance.

A decentralized system would allocate resources to local schools to cover the items of substitutes, vandalism, theft, and telephone. What is unspent in these budgeted categories belongs to the local school. In the case of vandalism and theft, it might be wise to share the funds with the student body, because it is essential that students also assume a sense of responsibility.

To be specific, in the case of vandalism and breakage, the district would compute a three-year average cost per student. If this annual figure were $10, then a school with a 2,000 student enrollment would cost $20,000. However, the district should allocate to the local school only 75 percent of this amount, which would be $15,000. The withheld 25 percent provides the district with a bank of money for special emergencies in a particular school. In the school with the $15,000, the principal would give wide attention to the plan to share the unexpended balance of this account with the student body and the instructional material fund. Each time an act of vandalism occurred, the cost would be openly substracted from the original amount. If the school exceeded $15,000 in vandalism, the district would pay the balance. The district could either subtract the additional money needed to meet vandalism costs from the next year's resource

allocation, or it could give the traditional admonishment to do a better job.

In essence, the concept utilizing Educational Equivalents is not an innovation, but an opportunity. If a school does not want to utilize the opportunity, it will not affect the central office budget at all. Schools are allocated the same amount of resources as in a traditional system, but they are not allocated in rigid terms of pupil-teacher ratios, a certain number of dollars for supplies, so much money for film rental, so many clerks, a set administrative structure and so forth. In this system, each school is allocated a principal and a certain number of educational equivalents.

Once again, this is not an innovation. However, it can aid in innovation. It is not a plan for differentiated staffing, for example, but it can provide the vehicle for staff differentiation.

V

AUTONOMY WITH ACCOUNTABILITY

To illustrate how the Flexible Independent Resource Allocation (FIRA) concept works, let us apply it to a district of 26,000 students, kindergarten through grade 12. District X has four high schools 9-12, four junior high schools 7 through 8, and twenty-five elementary schools K-6. It is situated in a growing area that is part of the expanding megalopolis. Currently its financial ability is about average for the state, although because of rapid construction, it has heavy bonded indebtedness.

To initiate FIRA, it is necessary to translate all of the existing resources of a district into Educational Equivalents. When this is done, one should not be surprised that there is an unequal distribution. This must be rectified, for one of the basic tenets of FIRA is that each school has equal resources behind each student.

To translate district resources into EE's an audit is taken of existing conditions, i.e., what are the current resources that will be included in EE's. This data is converted into EE's district wide and then reallocated according to student enrollment.

As a beginning, let's say a district wished to include teachers, counselors, clerical aid, supplies, conference money, field trip costs, and audio visual/film cost in the Flexible Independent Resource Allocation. A district-wide audit would produce this EE total.

305 full-time teachers average salary $12,800	=	305	EE
32 secretaries average salary $6,400	=	16	EE
18 couselors average salary $14,300	=	20	EE
$20 per student x 7,000 students	=	11	EE
$6,400 for conferences	=	0.5	EE
$14,000 field trip money	=	1.1	EE
$29,000 AV/Film rental money	=	2.2	EE
TOTAL		355.8	EE

It may be prudent to tabulate the resources of the elementary grades separately from the secondary grade. The purpose of the initial audit is to determine what resources are currently available and to translate these resources into Flexible Independent Resource Allocations (FIRA).

Fundamentally, this plan means abandoning the concept of pupil-teacher ratios. Under this latter concept, particularly at the secondary level, the schools in which the students take the greatest number of courses will also have the greatest amount of resources.

The rigid adherence to pupil-teacher ratios has stifled new concepts of applying resources and has provided more teachers to the "academic" schools in a district at the expense of the less wealthy areas. A district that assures similar pupil-teacher ratios in all schools is assuring that schools in affluent neighborhoods will have more resources than schools in the poorer neighborhoods.

Under FIRA, Educational Equivalents are allotted strictly on the number of students in a school. This does not rule out the opportunity to apply special EE's for special circumstances, but they should be recognized as special and not built into an unequal distribution of resources based on the number of courses students take.

To be specific, let us take one high school and one elementary school in District X. First, the high school.

The High School Plan

Previously, each school had received resources in the traditional manner. Each school had six basic administrators; it had a formula for released time for department chairmen; it had a district-wide allocation of clerical personnel such as registrar, attendance clerk, principal's secretary, and so forth. It also spent dollars on district formulas that covered items such as field trips, film rentals, conferences, student body allowance, money for stolen equipment, computer time and services, health services, and others.

High School H, under decentralized management, receives none of these formulas but receives the same resources in Educational Equivalents. The district has determined that for each 1,000 students, a high school will receive 52.4 EE's. High School H has a projected enrollment of 2,393. With a formula of 52.4 EE's per 1,000 students, this equation is produced:

$$\frac{52.4}{1{,}000} = \frac{X}{2{,}393}$$

$$X = 125.4 \text{ EE's}$$

The manner of determining enrollment is crucial, for this determines basic EE allocations. After the best projections have been made, a school should be told in March or, at the latest, April, what its EE allocation will be.

One of the areas of concern will be whether resources are allocated on October enrollment figures or mid-year figures. With the mobility of our population plus the increased acceptance of mid-year graduation and continuous program schools, the time of establishing enrollment is important. Ideally, October enrollment and February enrollment should be projected. A school would then be allocated the average of these two figures.

Principals, by the nature of the job, will normally project high enrollments in order to gain security of resources. It would be prudent for the district office to use conservative figures but also to apply this axiom: if enrollment increases markedly over projections, additional EE's will be provided. On the other hand, once the district has committed EE's to a school, it will not take them away if enrollment dips a bit. With this thought in mind, it would be wise for the district to keep a few EE's in reserve for emergencies.

High School H is expected to meet all of its basic educational functions with the allocation of 125.4 EE's. These include, among others:

Instruction	Health
Counseling/Guidance	Work experience
Field trips	Department chairmen
Registrar	Student body
Attendance	Film rentals and other media
Accounting	Grade reporting
Special custodial coverage	School public relations

There are still a few district-wide formulae that may be applicable. In District X, for example, High School H would receive a principal above its 125.4 EE's. It would also receive special allotments for the following:

Special education	Gifted
Remedial P. E.	Vocational education
Custodial and maintenance aid	Special government funded projects
State requirements	

The Elementary School Plan

Now, let us apply Flexible Independent Resource Allocations to Elementary School E in District X. Elementary School E has an enrollment of 560 students K-6.

While it is possible to allocate EE's to elementary schools on the same basis as high schools, that is, so many per thousand students, it is recommended that EE's be allotted one to a number of students. In District X, the formula is: 1 EE for every 23 students.

If the formula were based on the secondary formula of 52.4, there would be 1 EE for every 19 students. The reason for the higher figure is two-fold. First, there is the specialized nature of secondary schools which requires more resources in nearly every school district in the country. Secondly, elementary schools, unless very large, will be more dependent on the district office for general services.

One of the decisions at both secondary and elementary level will be what services the schools are responsible for and what are district responsibilities. For example, does the district assign a given number of days of a psychologist to a school, or does the school contract for its own psychologist either through the district or elsewhere or not at all.

Elementary School E with an enrollment of 560 and a district formula of 1 EE to 23 students applies this formula:

560 ÷ 23 = 24.3 EE's

Like the high school, the elementary school has a principal on top of its EE allocation. In District X, it has been decided that for the elementary schools, the district will provide the following:

Psychological services
Gifted
Special government projects (Title I, etc.)
Art consultant
Special education
Custodial and maintenance aid
Orchestra and band teachers

With its allocation of EE's, Elementary School E is expected to provide the following:

All instruction including physical education and music
Counseling/guidance
Attendance
Special custodial coverage
Grade reporting
Field trips
Accounting
Health
Public relations

A Time Line

A time line indicating the basic steps of FIRA is as follows:

November	Determine resources to be included in FIRA.
December	Estimate enrollment for following year.
January	Allocate EE's and fixed resources.
March	Principals submit FIRA allocations to superintendent.
April	Superintendent approves and submits allocation to the business office.
June	FIRA allocations subsumed in district budget.

The Lines of Authority, Where Do They Go?

To place decentralization, which includes Flexible Independent Resource Allocation, in perspective, we should trace the line of authority in District X. The basis of all authority is the Constitution, which by its absence of process for education, delegates to the various states the authority and responsibility for education.

The states in turn, pass many laws relating to education that are considered in the best interests of all the people in the state. School districts are obliged to carry out these laws, while also creating their own laws which are Board Policy. In District X, Board Policy does not delineate pupil-teacher ratios, school time schedules, and other procedural matters. It concerns itself with goals, leaving the administration of the schools up to the staff. The Board has a check on the amount of resources allocated to the schools through the district budget. The Board realizes that whether schools are staffed on the traditional basis or on the EE concept, the budget remains the same.

The Superintendent, through decentralization, offers an opportunity to individual schools by utilizing resources more creatively to meet local needs. Once again, decentralization through FIRA is not so much an innovation but an opportunity.' The Superintendent and his staff perform four major functions:

1. Define and articulate district and individual school goals and objectives.
2. Audit the goals and objectives in terms of performance and cost effectiveness.

3. Provide assistance to those schools which are unsuccessful in meeting goals and objectives.

4. Provide centralized services that are most efficiently and practically performed on a district basis, such as business, personnel, transportation, custodial, maintenance, special education, special schools, and others.

Initial resource allocations are based on the current situation in a school district. After the current resources are converted to EE's, then that becomes the initial EE formula. If this is done accurately, it should make no difference to the total district budget if schools deviate from traditional formulas.

After the basic EE formula has been established, it is perfectly legitimate for the superintendent and board to make special allotments. As stated before, these allotments are generally for services that are supervised by the district office such as driver education and special education. However, special allotments may also be made for special educational situations in a school. Recognition of special problems should be limited to compensatory allotments for large percentages of underprivileged students.

To illustrate this, High School Y has a high percentage of low-achieving minority students. With a projected enrollment of 2,329 students, it receives 122 EE's on the formula of 52.4 per 1,000 students. In addition, High School Y receives special allocations totaling 5.2 EE's to cover special education, remedial physical education, and Title I NDEA personnel. Because High School Y has a large percentage of students with educational difficulties, the superintendent allocates three more EE's. This gives High School Y a grand total of 130.2 EE's.

In initiating FIRA, greater acceptance may be expected if additional resources can be allocated beyond the present situation. While it is hoped that eventually the total allocation of EE's will be debated by the staff to determine how best to meet resources, initially it will only be additional resources that are open to discussion.

Teachers are not oriented to looking at total school priorities in light of limited resources. Teachers quite naturally have concern over their particular area. They reason that if there are other needs, then it is up to the school board to provide resources. With patience and training, teachers can become educators who are able to put aside provincial perspective and view the total school program.

How to Handle Reducing Resources

The principles of FIRA apply as well to reducing resources as to adding resources. In this day of uncertain school financing, a district can find itself with additional resources one year and the need to economize the next.

It takes more discipline to apply autonomy with accountability in a time of economy, than in a time of affluence. Nevertheless, the basic principles remain the same. These principles state:

a. Schools are not identical in the needs of students, desires of parents, talent of the faculty, and leadership style of the administration.

b. There are limited resources.

c. Local schools should have a great deal of independence in meeting state, district, and local school goals.

When resources must be diminished in a district, it would be inconsistent with FIRA to take district-wide action in a given area. This action, however, is often observed in districts that economize by banning all after-school reports or field trips, reducing counselors, or similar sweeping cutbacks. Under the FIRA concept, the superintendent or board would not designate a specific area in the schools for economy, but would reduce the EE formula. In the case of District X, with 8,000 students 9-12, a reduction in the formula from 52.4 EE's per 1,000 students to 50.4 per thousand at the secondary level would eliminate 16 EE's. If an EE is equal to $12,800, this means 16 x $12,800, or $204,000.

Just as each school would add EE's in many divergent ways to meet local school needs, so should EE's be reduced. By identifying areas of least priority, the staff is able to eliminate resources at the local level in a manner that will have the least adverse effect on the students.

Alternatives

Autonomy with accountability means that each school must debate within itself the best ways to apply the resources of time, space, people, and material. Hopefully in this debate, educators will lay aside parochial departmental or grade level concerns and will act not as teachers but as educators.

Autonomy with accountability with the FIRA concept is not an innovation per se, but it does offer unlimited opportunities to imaginatively apply resources to meet student needs. Besides the opportunity to differentiate staffing, it suggests differentiated application of staffing.

For example, research indicates that the variable that has the greatest impact on education is the home environment. If this is accepted, then it would be appropriate for a staff to elect to raise class loads in order to release teachers to work with parents. Under traditional systems, this would occur only if the district allocated additional resources district wide or if the Federal Government introduced a program as under Title I.

The point is that this kind of broad professional thinking and subsequent action is possible at the local school level without waiting hopelessly for external permission and financial aid.

VI

EXAMPLES OF DECENTRALIZATION

Budgeting

Under decentralization, each school has great latitude in developing individual budgets. Most of the same alternatives, formerly on a district basis, are now available on a school basis.

It is essential that the principal share with, at least his staff, decisions regarding the distribution of school resources. Some schools may also wish to involve parents, students, and members of the community. A principal should review with his staff the resource allocation directed to their school. Constraints affecting the distribution of these resources should be understood as well as the full range of decisions that are available.

A principal should remove those resources needed to run his school office and to influence education. After justifying his needs, the remainder of Educational Equivalents (EE's) should be available for priority placement. Eventually a school which uses the system will find itself debating the major educational needs of students and deciding the best means to meet these needs. This process is contrasted to the petty bickering that occurs usually as each department or grade level narrowly defends its own domain.

Under good leadership, a staff will learn that, even within legislative constraints and local district policy, there are many alternatives available for resource application.

A school may elect to accumulate a reserve which can be carried from one year to the next. In other words, a school may save its money for a large

expenditure. Many districts do not allow schools to carry forward unexpended balances. This process produces indiscriminate and wasteful purchasing. Under decentralization, a local school has control over the resources which it economizes upon and saves.

A school may elect to devote major resources one year to supplies and equipment with the understanding that for one year, pupil-teacher ratios may climb. By merely converting two EE's into equipment, a school or department could obtain $25,600 worth of additional learning equipment to make all teachers more effective. It is always understood that EE's may be used fractionally. Therefore, a compromise might be to take two EE's and divide them between material and paraprofessionals. The options available then are three-fold:

2 EE's = 2 teachers
2 EE's = $25,600 equipment
2 EE's = 2 paraprofessionals, plus $12,800 equipment.

A school may wish to devote resources in directions indicated by research. For example, research repeatedly indicates the importance of early years to the development of skills and attitudes. An elementary school might use EE's to reduce pupil-teacher ratios K-3 at the expense of higher ratios in the intermediate grades.

Other research indicates that the variable that has the greatest effect on learning is not the differences between schools but the differences between home environments. If this conclusion is accepted, would it not be logical to redirect resources from traditional classroom activities to home counseling. Minimum day schedules and partial day could be utilized to send teacher-home counselors into the residential community.

Wise application of resources demands total staff involvement. This involvement must divest itself of narrow views and must not look to others for

assistance. The individual school has its resources. Now it is responsible for utilizing these resources on a long-range basis, in the best manner to achieve school goals.

Purchasing

Under decentralization, the district office performs strictly a service function. It has the responsibility of using group purchasing power to attain the greatest return on the dollar. Individual schools will realize there are purchasing benefits to uniformity. The difference from a traditional system is that the decision to be uniform in purchasing is voluntary.

It is not the mission of the district office or school board to veto local school purchasing. How a local school decides to convert EE's into resources is its business. Once again, it will take discipline to hold a school accountable for student performance and not to second guess it on its purchasing decisions.

The FIRA concept encourages greater purchasing responsibility for several reasons. First, it ensures that the local school wants a given item enough to select its purchase over the use of an EE for other purposes. After thorough debate, an item is carefully selected over other uses of the EE--more personnel, planning time, or a myriad of school needs.

Secondly, because EE's can be carried over in a school from year to year, a school does not purchase a commodity just to use up its resources before they are converted to the district's beginning balance. The district, in granting EE's to a school, does not demand the return of unspent resources any more than the state asks for the return of ending balances from local districts. This principle is vital in creating responsibilty at the local school, departmental and grade level.

A local school, department, and grade level can accumulate its own reserve. Too many times a local school purchases items just to use up a special purpose allocation. Also, local schools always accept anything that the district purchases whether it is needed or not. This is one reason why school storage areas are bulging with unwanted and unused teaching materials. FIRA encourages frugal and critical allocation of resources.

Finally, decentralization encourages purchasing responsibility because economy pays off. In a real sense a penny saved is a penny earned. If money is saved on wise purchasing, there is a local payoff. The local school not only receives a pat on the back for saving money, but it also gets to keep the money for its own purposes. Contrast this to the traditional system where economical purchasing only paid off in a kind word from the district business manager.

Carried further, FIRA encourages thrift, better maintenance, and conservation of materials. If a local school reduces paper costs, it has the money to use for other purposes. If a school saves on its telephone bill, the money saved is the local school's.

While it is recommended that the district office still act as a central purchasing agency, each school should maintain a contingency fund to purchase those many small items that are cheaper to buy right now than to process through the system. The district keeps the books for the local school, informing it periodically of its budgetary condition. Local school purchases with tags should be itemized and submitted to the district each month for auditing purposes.

Teaching Strategies

A decentralized school system can tolerate many varied teaching strategies. Gone are the lengthy arguments over one teaching method versus another. These monotonous arguments are replaced by concern over student performance rather than teaching procedures.

The most influential variable in education, one which minimizes all others, is the individual talent of the teacher. True, all things being equal, research indicates that certain teaching strategies are more effective than others. While this research should not be ignored, it should not be the major determinant of teaching strategies. An eclectic system that takes advantage of individual talents will be far more effective than adherence to a pedagogical dogma. Student performance, not teacher performance, is what counts.

A decentralized system, therefore, will take into consideration individual differences in teachers and students. As an illustration, let us consider the area of social studies, the discipline that attracts the greatest amount of public concern and criticism, with the possible exception of reading.

All of us are familiar with the non-directive, liberal social studies teacher who is considered a threat to Americanism by some parents. Let us call this teaching style I. Then there is the middle-of-the-road teacher who is somewhat directive in his teaching strategies but encourages students to embark on individual research. This is style II. We are also aware of the very traditional teacher who is the pride of conservatives, but a bore to many students. He covers the text thoroughly, quizzes every Friday, and lectures most of the time. This is style III.

Under a decentralized system, each of these teachers would declare his teaching style. The students would not just sign up for World History, but would have a choice of World History--style I, II, or III, dependent on the teacher. If enough students did not elect a certain style, then the choice lies with the teacher either to change his style, leave, or sell it to parents and students.

Decentralization not only permits a variation of teaching strategies among schools, but within schools. Carried to its extreme, we find developing now the

alternative schools of Philadelphia, San Francisco, and Berkeley. Decentralized management permits entire schools to deviate markedly from normal teaching strategies to meet the desires and needs of a few students and parents.

Personnel Practices

Through decentralized application of the Flexible Independent Resource Allocation concept, there can be a great tolerance within a district regarding personnel practices. It must be kept in mind that the initial application of resources under FIRA on one hand and the traditional method on the other start from two opposing foci.

The FIRA concept asks the question: What do we need to accomplish? It follows this by asking: What is the best way to apply our resources to accomplish our goals in this school? The traditional method starts with rigid ratios and allocation such as student/teacher ratio, administrative allocation, allocation per pupil for supplies, films and field trips; specialist ratios, such as psychological help, art supervisors, and P. E. teachers. After the resources are allocated, the problem areas bulge out and the school asks for extra aid to solve these problems. If the district comes through, after a considerable amount of justification and argument, the hassle is over. If the district does not come through, then it is "unresponsive to the needs of students."

Under FIRA, individual school priorities are established first and resources are applied accordingly. If a school is doing poorly in reading, it can place additional resources of personnel, materials, and time in this area. If a school has a need for advanced courses, it can divert resources to Advanced Placement Courses.

For a high school in a poor neighborhood, the correct staffing procedures may be fewer course offerings at the secondary level but smaller class sizes.

In this school, the average student may take only four or five courses. Under the traditional allocation system, this school would receive fewer teachers than a school where the average student took six or seven courses, despite the fact that it had a similar enrollment. Under the traditional concept, the name of the game is to create a schedule where students take many courses. In this manner, the school receives more personnel.

Under FIRA, a school has the option of fewer courses with a smaller pupil-teacher ratio or fewer courses with more aides and tutors or fewer courses with a superabundance of learning materials.

In a system that employs autonomy with accountability, various configurations of tutors, teachers, aides, clerks, and counselors can be applied. These personnel alternatives are also interchangeable with learning materials and technological aides, if, in the staff's opinion, this is the best route to take to solve the problem.

VII

PROBLEMS AND ISSUES

Presently, there are a number of school districts involved, in varying degrees, with decentralization. Whether large or small, these districts are confronted with similar basic issues. To provide perspective, a number of school superintendents of districts involved in decentralization were asked four questions. The questions asked were: How are decisions made at the local level in your district? How do you determine what to decentralize? What relation does accountability have to decentralized management? And, do you feel that what you are doing now, in the final analysis, is helping kids to learn?

Central to the concept of decentralization is the hope that decisions at the local school level will be responsive to student needs. In reply to the question, "How are decisions made at the local level in your district?", superintendents who are decentralizing their districts had this to say:

> --He's (the principal) required to have an advisory committee of parents, students, and teachers, who advise him in regard to budget decisions. But he is still independent of that, in that it is not an approving group. It's an advisory group. Each principal is responsible for appointing this group. He asks the Academic Senate for names, he asks the student council for names, and he asks the PTA too. If he thinks his team is non-representative from an ethnic point of view, then he'll go to the Black Task Force or the Chicano Task Force and ask for augmentation. He has to justify to me that he has a representative advisory council. It's his school, and it's different from other schools. The Board merely said that this group has to be representative. It doesn't call for numbers or sizes or anything else.
>
> --Not every one of our schools has an advisory board. We would like to move toward every school having an advisory board, and in our case, we have that board se[illegible] by the principal. In Los Angeles, of course, they do it by election.

The Role of Advisory Councils in Decision Making in Los Angeles Is Described:

> --The following are minimum guidelines. New councils may be elected or may be a combination of elected and appointed members, provided the majority shall be parents of children enrolled in the school and elected by the community. Appointments by existing school support groups, the faculty and students, must be provided. The Council will advise the principal on school matters and the educational program. It will be a resource to the principal who remains responsible for decisions. Each school advisory council shall establish its own rules. Its meetings will be open to the public on adequate notice, and at least six meetings will be held during the school year.
>
> --Decision making comes about in a variety of ways, depending on the grade level of the school. I notice sometimes that it is happening in the smaller elementary schools where the principal and his entire faculty get together every week and make such decisions as to how to spend the remainder of a third of a staffing unit that's been assigned to them. I've seen this is action in the elementary schools with faculties from 10 to 20. In the larger schools, it becomes more departmentalized and compartmentalized. One high school is divided into 4 or 5 divisions, and the division heads become a part of the principal's council, or principal's cabinet, since the major decision-making process takes place at that level. Doing away with a multiplicity of department heads, setting up 5 or 6 basic divisions, and having the division chairmen sit with the assistant principal and director of activities to make up the principal's cabinet seems to be working fairly well. As far as the local community council route is concerned, I'm not sure that it's necessary in every district. We secure a tremendous amount of community involvement. People are involved in all decisions, but not in a formal way.

There are advantages and disadvantages to large and small organizations. Through decentralization, hopefully, the strengths of a large organization can also support the benefits of a smaller organization. When superintendents were asked this question, "How do you determine what to decentralize?", these answers were received:

> --First of all, we're learning. We've tried to decentralize the budget, internal instructional decisions, and the organization of the schools. We have a parody regarding the selection of personnel. The personnel office at the district makes a recommendation, but the principal really has the final decision on it. There is more or less equal allocation of resources to each school, based on projected enrollment. We have a pupil-teacher ratio, and we allocate staff on that basis and allocate resource people beyond that on a ratio basis.

--We started off with finance. We found that we wanted to do a step at a time. We didn't want to do th whole thing at once. The first thing we did was to start off with our budget and let schools take the bulk of their categorical items and consolidate them into one. In fact, I think they can take everything, that is, their capital outlay, replacements, supply budget and all of the things of that type and consolidate them into the one budget. Then, the second step we took was to consolidate personnel in the same type of thing. Now the whole budget is one big glob. We still allocate resources on the same standards that we did before, but now they can interchange them any way that they want to.

With freedom goes responsibility, and with autonomy goes accountability. When asked the question, "What relation does accountability have to decentralized management?", superintendents involved with decentralization made the following replies:

--Our accountability system is developing. I really don't think that I am as much worried about accountability as I am about the ability of the principals to be both a manager and instructional leader. I think that's the crux of the problem. When you decentralize, you need a different sort of principal. He needs to have more maleness or femaleness than some principals like. There's no one for him to lean on. Therefore, you have to keep a close enough relationship with him in a supportive way so that he can lean when he should. The principal can be very lonely out there.

--This is our biggest push. We've divided our district up into zones. My top assistants and I have divided responsibilities so that we meet with each zone leader on a face-to-face basis very frequently. I took all of the other central office administrators out of the line organization. The only people who are directing the principals are the associate superintendents and myself. This means that the principals are directly accountable to us. We are giving the principals almost carte blanche resources, but we're getting closer and closer to mandating certain sorts of reports as far as accountability is concerned. The best accountability thing we have going for us right now is a massive and monster calendar which indicates what each person's responsibilities are, the line of responsibility, the date the responsibility is to be completed, and the date it is to be assessed. The thing is about eight feet long and is becoming our bible.

--We have 14 goals. We said that there would be four of them that we are going to pursue at the present time. We started off with two, and we added one, then we added another, so that we got to four goals. So we have four goals that we're really pushing on. I tell every school and every area director that they must set up a system by which these goals can be monitored. In addition to these goals, they can have whatever individual goals that they want.

Decentralization, as a management process, should be accountable itself. The fundamental measure is whether or not it helps children. When asked the question, "Do you feel that what you're doing now is helping, in the final analysis, kids to learn?", superintendents gave these responses:

> --Definitely. It's making a difference. We're finding that from a school standpoint we're getting a better use of funds, but from a district standpoint, it's costing us a little bit more to do it. The reason it's costing more is because of supervision and accounting.
>
> --So far, I haven't seen any change that I can say is better as far as learning. What it really does do, though, in a community such as ours, where human involvement is of a necessity for survival, is that you at least survive so that you can continue to give some kind of education.
>
> --Hopefully, it is showing greater responsibility in the allocation of resources which, in turn, is reflected in student learning.
>
> --My biggest problem right now with the whole thing is that I went a little too fast, and I didn't set up a monitoring system and an evaluation system every time I released any control. I'm not satisfied that I handled that as well as I should.
>
> --Well, hopefully we'll filter through to the teachers and make them, in turn, more responsive to the needs of the kids. I think what it does is put the decision making closer to the decision carrying out. What it does is make weak people come to the surface, and when they do surface, they become vulnerable, and we're able to get rid of them.

* * * *

This book presents a tested plan of decentralized schools. This plan cannot fit exactly every school district, but the principles upon which it stands are sound. To determine if we have been successful in persuading you to accept this concept, perhaps you should take the initial survey again. Have you moved further toward accepting schools with autonomy and accountability?